

## **EXHIBIT J**



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

July 3, 2019

Elyssa Romino, Esq.  
Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP  
Four Embarcadero Center, 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94111-5998

Dear Ms. Romino:

Thank you for your letter of June 19, 2019, in which you note that the Department of State has not yet responded to your Freedom of Information Act ("FOIA") request. Your request has been assigned case number F-2019-04119.

Your FOIA request is not subject to administrative appeal at this time, since no specific material has been denied in response to the request. Section (a)(6)(C) of the FOIA provides that a requester shall be deemed to have exhausted his administrative remedies if an agency fails to respond within the applicable time limit specified in the paragraph, which is twenty days (with certain exceptions). The requester, therefore, would not be required to appeal administratively before instituting suit in federal court. This provision does not, however, provide a basis for an administrative appeal of a request that is still being processed. Moreover, the lack of a substantive response to date is not the same as a response indicating that no documents were found.

I have confirmed that your request is being processed. The Department receives thousands of FOIA and Privacy Act requests each year and yours will be processed in turn. I have sent a copy of your letter to the office that has been assigned responsibility for processing your request. If you need further assistance, you may contact the FOIA Requester Service Center at (202) 261-8484 or [FOIAstatus@state.gov](mailto:FOIAstatus@state.gov).

In 2007, the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) was created to offer mediation services to resolve disputes between FOIA requesters and Federal agencies as

a non-exclusive alternative to litigation. Using OGIS services does not affect your right to pursue litigation. If you desire this service, you may contact OGIS at: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road-OGIS, College Park, MD 20740.

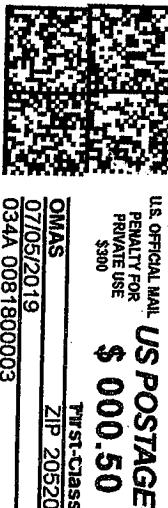
Sincerely,

  
Lori Hartmann  
Appeals Officer  
Office of Information Programs and Services

Appeals Unit, A/G/S/IPS/PP/II  
Room 4053, SA-2  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20522-8100

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

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